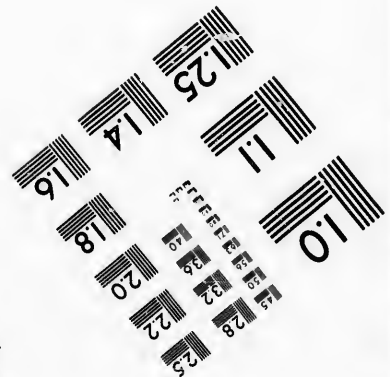
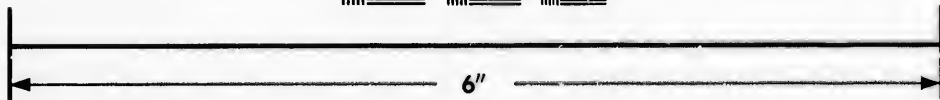
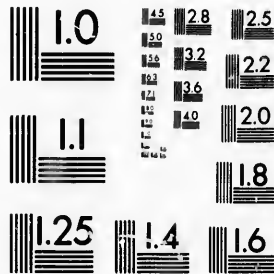


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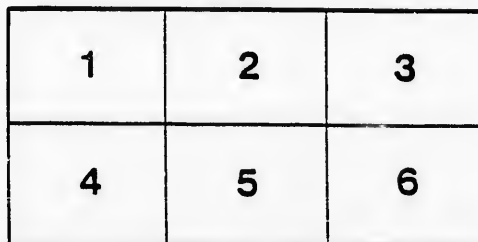
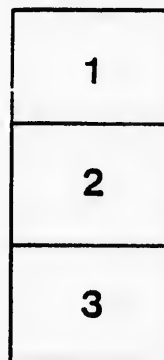
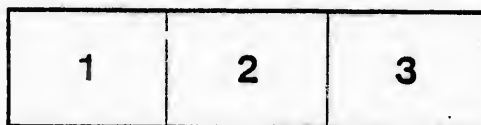
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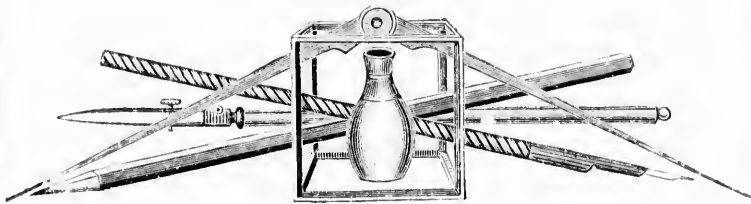
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THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

IN studying the plans laid down by Friedrich Froebel for the education of young children, one is reminded of a passage in his letter to Krause, where he says :

Here there budded and opened to my soul one lovely bright spring morning, when I was surrounded by Nature at her loveliest and freshest, this thought, as it were by inspiration : That there must exist somewhere some beautifully simple and certain way of freeing human life from contradiction, or, as I then spake out my thought in words, some means of restoring to man himself at peace internally ; and that to seek out this way should be the vocation of my life.

Froebel in his own childhood had suffered much from this contradiction in life. He had a severe father and an unsympathetic step-mother; and had himself felt the ill effects of a stern and rigid rule, which merely required conformity to the given law without inquiring if conformity were possible. He had found this kind of rule a hindrance to true development, inasmuch as organic growth can not take place according to rules prescribed from without, but only according to the natural law. Gradually the idea took shape in his mind that this contradiction was not a necessary condition of life, that the soul and the outer world are not meant to be forever at war, that when we have learned to live aright this conflict will cease and they will be at one.

The idea of the introduction of harmony into education and into life seems to be the keynote of all Froebel's teaching. At the time that the thought above quoted from the letter of Krause first came to him he had not as yet realized that this harmony might be effected by a change in education ; he came gradually to see that the object for which he was striving was the substitution of development for repression and arbitrary rule. He says again in the same letter :

My experience, especially that gained by repeated residences at the university, had taught me beyond a doubt that the method of education hitherto in use—especially where it involved learning by rote, and where it looked at subjects simply from the outside or historically, and considered them capable of apprehension by mere exercise-work—dulled the edge of all true high attainment, of all real mental insight, of all genuine progress in scientific culture, of self-contemplation, and thus of all real knowledge and of the acquisition of truth through knowledge. I might almost go further and say that its tendency was toward rendering all these worthy objects impossible. Therefore I was firmly convinced, as of course I still am, that the whole former educational system, even that which had received improvement, ought to be exactly reversed and regarded from a diametrically opposite point of view—namely, that of a system of development.

The principles of Froebel, when rightly understood, are not only a guide enabling us to form natural systems of education, but also a far-reaching criticism of life in general, teaching as they do that the ideal life is not one in which there is constant strife between the soul and the outer

world, but one in which these are in harmony; that we must not waste our energies in striving to perform the impossible, but must rather work out our best impulses with integrity and without affectation. But while Froebel's principles are in theory equally applicable to the conduct of life and to methods of education, they are practically more easily applied to the latter, for the outer world in which our children live is less complicated and more easily regulated and arranged. We can not provide them with an ideal world, but we can do much more for them toward this object than we can for ourselves. Let it not be said that they will thus be unfitted for life in the world as it is. Rather will they be strengthened and enabled to take their places rightly therein—enabled also each in his own sphere and according to his strength to exert the right kind of influence upon the outer world and help on progress in the right direction.

A well-regulated *Kindergarten* is an example on a small scale of what life in the outer world ought to be. Each individual is encouraged to exercise choice in all cases where it is not hurtful to the community, and no one is compelled to do disagreeable things for the sake of what is so often falsely called discipline. The children are not asked if they are good or told that they are bad. They are not encouraged to think about themselves at all, but the moral feelings are unconsciously developed because there is an atmosphere of sympathy and happiness. Fear, the most common cause of untruthfulness in children, is entirely removed, and the nature of the surroundings is such as to gradually diminish other causes, such as boastfulness and selfishness. The teacher watches the children and makes use of their own natural tendencies to further the objects which he has in view. He works with them, constantly helping and encouraging, gently turning their efforts in the right direction, and never takes up the position of a cold and rigid martinet. A child who does not succeed in anything he is trying to do is not punished and generally not blamed; but the children are not idle, because they are interested in their work, and because success is always preferable to failure. On the moral as well as on the intellectual side, the teacher does not make demands upon the powers of the children which are not likely to be satisfied. Right action in this matter requires sympathy, judgment, and experience. It is hurtful to the moral nature to be asked to perform a good action of which that nature is not yet capable, but it is by the performance of that which is within its powers that the moral nature is strengthened and developed. Thus the child learns by doing, and moral progress becomes a steady development instead of a constant struggle between duty and inclination. This is the only way of reaching that absence of effort which is as necessary to a harmonious life as it is to a work of art. It also tends to produce in every individual a certain true simplicity of nature, which in a sense makes every one a genius by freeing him from the bondage of a dull conventionalism.

The same principles apply on the intellectual side of development. One must not set up an arbitrary standard before the child and crudely expect him to attain to that. In short, we must find something which he can do, and not peremptorily order him to perform things which are impossible to him. What is the right cure for idleness? First of all it may be safely stated that punishment is *not* the cure. Idleness is generally a sign either that the work is too difficult or that it is unsuited to the child. Very few children will prefer doing nothing to suitable occupation; and those few are in an unhealthy condition, probably caused by previous mismanagement. A head master remarked not long ago in a speech on prize-day that he had often seen an apparently dull boy changed into a bright, happy one, by being set to practical work in the laboratory. When children are dull, it is the business of the persons who are educating them to find out why they are dull, and apply the right remedy. The children can not find it out for themselves, any more than they can discover the causes and cures of their bodily ailments. They often have a vague sense that they are not being treated fairly, and in some cases they even learn to regard teachers as their natural enemies.

The fact is, that not only is teaching useless when it fails to arouse interest, but it is injurious to the moral nature as well as to the mind. An ignorant boy is a less unsatisfactory object than one crammed with undigested information. One does not know how to begin to improve the latter; he seems a hopeless case; he is persuaded that all school-books are unutterably dull, and never opens one if he can avoid doing so. When this state of mind is once produced it is difficult to alter it. Probably it can only be altered by giving up school-books entirely for many months, and putting the boy to some totally new occupation. But it is by no means an impossible task to prevent its being produced at all. In a *Kindergarten* a child's mind never gets into this state. There is a steady development which should be continued throughout the period of education. The pressure of contradictions—which is incompatible with real moral and intellectual progress—should never be introduced.

One of the problems of the present time is the successful application of Froebel's principles to the education of children beyond the age for the *Kindergarten*. Owing to the fact that the attention of teachers has been more frequently directed to the practical working out of Froebel's principles so far as young children are concerned than to the general principles themselves and their application to the training of older children, we have not yet a good system of training for children too old for the *Kindergarten* and too young for the grammar school. In many *Kindergartens* there are classes for children who have reached this stage, and an attempt is made to carry on the system; but the teaching is apt to be a little too childish, to fail in rousing fresh interests and not to develop sufficiently the energies of the children. Yet it appears to be less injurious than that often given

to children between seven and fourteen years old in the junior classes of grammar schools and high schools, where tasks are too often set which are beyond the powers of the children, or fail to arouse their interest, in some cases even producing a feeling of positive disgust toward all kinds of school-work. A few months of such teaching often destroys the effect of years of careful and wholesome training. The child learns nothing which is of any real value, and his whole moral nature is strained and irritated. Perhaps fear of the teacher is added to the other difficulties of the case—and yet it would not be fair to blame him too severely. It is difficult for masters who are inexperienced in teaching, and fresh from the university, to understand and sympathize with the requirements of minds at a stage of development so different from their own. In many cases they are doing their work as well as they know how to do it; but they have undertaken a difficult task, and often have no idea of the care which is needed to perform it rightly. True sympathy with children is chiefly found in the young who can remember their own childhood distinctly, and in those who are old enough to have the feelings of a parent toward them. A few men, and more women, have it throughout life. It would not be possible, however, to select a person less likely to have sympathy with a child than a man between the age of twenty and twenty-four, who has lately been giving all his attention to the development of his own mind. As this is the kind of teacher boys under twelve years old generally have in grammar schools, the result is naturally not satisfactory. But the fault is more in the system than in the individual teacher.

It is not yet generally recognized that the younger a child is, the more important is the training which he receives. Froebel realized this fully, and wisely applied himself to working out in detail a good system of training for very young children. In our time a system of wholesome training for children between seven and fourteen is still urgently needed. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to enter into detail as to what this training must or must not be. But some points may be mentioned. (1) There must be the regular performance of some kind of useful work suited to the age and capacity of the child. (2) Book-learning must be given up in the case of any child to whom it can not be made pleasurable. (3) Prizes must not be given for success in school-work, nor punishment for failure. (4) The natural love that children have for games must be taken advantage of, so as to cause a healthy development of the moral nature, the physical powers, the imagination, etc. (5) The energies of the child must be fully as well as harmoniously developed, and the child's growth must not be stunted by too easy work. (6) A love of nature and of all forms of beauty must be stimulated and encouraged.

The difficulty of establishing a natural system of education is much increased by the anxiety on the part of parents to see at every point evidence of their children's progress. This natural but inconvenient wish has pre-

vented the *Kindergarten* system from coming more generally into use, and unless parents can be induced to place more confidence in the capacity and judgment of teachers, it is to be feared that it will also prevent the introduction of improved systems of training for older children. In inspecting schools for young children an examiner should make it his business to find out whether they are being taught in the right way, not whether they have reached a high standard of book-knowledge. The latter is of little or no importance, the former is all-important. We should not hear so many protests against examinations if examiners knew how to do their work rightly. At present examiners think it is their business to find out what the children know, and so long as that is the case examinations will not be satisfactory. Are the children's minds in a healthy state, and are their faculties being drawn out in the right way? These are the questions that need attention. An examination should be so conducted as to avoid developing self-consciousness and other morbid tendencies. We want to teach the children to be, not to seem. More freedom is needed both for teachers and children. Perhaps it may not be thought safe to grant the freedom; that has often been the case in history, and yet the grant of freedom has been generally justified by its results.

Frequent examinations prevent natural growth. We do not expect our gardeners to show us the roots of their growing plants. A child's attention should be fixed if possible more on the subject of study itself than on his own progress in it, and examinations as they are now conducted are apt to prevent this. They are less injurious to older children when an interest in the subjects themselves has been firmly established. But all examinations tend to encourage the performance of work in order to show what one can do, which is not a good motive for human conduct. It is wholesome to work from interest in a subject, or in order to help others, but not in order to show that we can do well, still less that we can do better than others. An object of this kind tends to destroy that "harmony of life," that "peacefulness of heart," the attainment of which for himself and others was Froebel's chief object. In our time, when the conflict of life seems to be constantly increasing, this harmony and peacefulness seem to be further off than ever. It is more difficult to introduce harmony into complicated than into simple forms of life. We have had many writers of pretty ballads, but only one Shakespeare. In past generations there were many people who lived harmonious but narrow lives, the men pursuing the same occupations which their fathers pursued before them, and the women chiefly occupied with household concerns, thus quietly passing through a life of calm content without hurry or striving. Many of them worked out in their lives the saying that "to do is better than to know," though perhaps if they had heard it they would hardly have understood it. But this kind of life has become impossible, and the problem now is how to introduce unity into the turmoil of modern life.

Like Froebel, when a problem of the same kind presented itself to him, we turn to a change in education for its solution. Much may be done by training children to value things in their right proportions from the first, and by encouraging them to preserve the simplicity and reality of childhood, instead of exchanging them for the shams and conventions of "grown-up-land." Our faith ought not to be less than that of Froebel. It is true that the conditions are now more complicated, but on the other hand the world is now beginning to awake to the immense importance of right education. We are now taking pains to find out what is really wanted in the lives of the poor, instead of trying to force upon them things which we think they ought to want, so that many lives, which would otherwise be very narrow, are gradually being widened in a wholesome way. It is going out of fashion to offer to people, because they are poor, mental and moral food which the givers would decline if offered to themselves. In short, there is more reality than at any former period in the efforts of the rich to help the poor, and an earnest attack is being made in this direction on the contradictions of life. There are many among the rich who are painfully oppressed by the weight of luxuries, which it appears impossible under present conditions to share with others, and are making earnest endeavors to find out the right kind of mercy which shall really bless him that gives and him that takes. It is found that something can be done by offering opportunities for culture, for innocent enjoyment, for participation in simple pleasures, and, to those who are capable of it, for deeper thought. So that here also we find in wholesome education a lessening of the contradictions of life.

And just as a thoughtful teacher learns nearly as much from his pupils as they learn from him, so do those who are engaged in widening the lives of the poor find themselves refreshed and strengthened by the wholesome simplicity, practical common sense, and steady patience which are so often found among those who spend their lives in hard manual toil. Steady work teaches many lessons which cannot be learned in any other way, and when it does not absorb the whole nature, and is such that the worker can take pleasure in it—it is wholesome training. So much is this the case that perhaps what is most needed just now for the children of those who are not poor is this same manual work, if only for a short time every day. In this would be found a cure for many of the nervous diseases which are so common. It would give some knowledge of the nature of the objects with which we are surrounded, and the right feeling of respect for labor which it is difficult to give in any other way. It would develop the physical powers and the natural tendency which children have to help others, a tendency which is very insufficiently developed at present. The work must be useful—one kind of useful work being of course the production of beautiful things—or it will fail in its chief object. The child must not think it is done entirely for his sole benefit, and therefore it must

not be solely done for that purpose, as it is no part of sound education to deceive a child for his supposed good.

In a well-conducted *Kindergarten* the children do work which fulfills these conditions so far as it is possible to do so at their age. The right kind of beginning is made. As they get older they should learn to do harder work and work of a more practical kind, and also continue the endeavor to produce beautiful things. There is no kind of useful work which can not be made a pleasure to the worker if set about in the right way. Froebel, in writing of his childhood, mentions the advantage he received from helping his father and mother in gardening and in household occupations.

As in intellectual work, it is very important not to make too large demands at first upon the powers of the child. The development of his powers must be gradual and will then be pleasurable. If a feeling of despair is allowed to arise, progress becomes impossible until the happiness of the child is restored by encouragement. Pleasure and trust in the teacher are necessary conditions of development. Nothing satisfactory can be accomplished by a teacher without close sympathy with and love for the child. An attempt to further the development of a human being by harsh rule and stern command, with threats of punishment, is like pulling the branches of a tree to make them grow. If the tree be firm and strong, no effect is produced beyond some slight damage to the branches; but if the tree be young and tender, its delicate roots are bruised and broken. Growth does not come by force. The right conditions must be supplied, the right food offered, and then the growth will take place naturally and freely. It is most true, as Froebel points out, that plant-life teaches many lessons about education.

In child nature there is an infinite variety, and sympathy with the special needs of each individual is necessary for right development. We want to lighten somewhat the pressure of custom which lies upon us with a weight

“ Heavy as frost and deep almost as life.”

and to bring out in every child something of that fresh originality of mind which, when it is found, makes even ignorant persons agreeable companions and useful members of society, and which is also the first condition of brilliant success in all work.

Nature is a great healer and sets many crooked things straight. A child's mind, when working under reasonably free conditions, seizes upon that which it requires and disregards that which is unnecessary or hurtful. There is some tendency on the part of teachers in the *Kindergarten* not to realize this quite sufficiently, and consequently to make their system a little too artificial. It is not satisfactory to bind one's self down too rigidly to one method however good. The laws of mental development are at present very imperfectly understood. Growth often takes place in unex-

pected ways, or does not take place when we should expect it. The order of development is less rigid and more variable than is sometimes supposed. If this were not the case, there would be more difference than there is at present between a child educated in a *Kindergarten*, and one educated in a well-ordered home. In the home the objects present themselves to the child without any fixed order—he tumbles into knowledge; and this want of system is not without its advantages, seeing that we can not make our systems perfect. Even if a definite system be pursued, some time and opportunity must be given at all stages of education for this chance development. In a homewhere a child is allowed, under the care of some educated person, to investigate the objects around him and the natural and artificial processes which are conducted in the house and its surroundings, much healthy development may take place without any fixed system. But a life which is limited to the nursery with artificial playthings and a daily walk by the side of a perambulator is eminently unsatisfactory. An ignorant nurse has no idea of the kind of sympathy and help a child requires. Even when she is fond of him she interrupts the workings of his mind with rude laughter. She does not understand how to speak the truth, though if convenient she will stigmatize an unintentional misstatement as a lie. She will capriciously surround him with vexatious restrictions, yet will develop self-consciousness and selfishness by flattery and over-indulgence. This is not a promising state of things; but a determined child, especially if he be fortunate enough to have brothers and sisters, will modify it somewhat by engaging in active and healthy play whenever he can elude the vigilance of his nurse, who is full of anxiety about the state of his clothes, and disapproves of most kinds of games. In a house where a reasonable amount of freedom is allowed, and where the children are intelligent and active in mind and body, they will, unaided by their elders, carry on their development by means of games in a fairly satisfactory manner. This part of education is, however, better managed in a *Kindergarten* than anywhere else. Opposing tendencies are woven into harmony by the experienced teacher, suggestions are made when required, and the needs of all the children are duly considered. Every child takes part according to his ability, and no one is forgotten or neglected. The children are perfectly happy, because they are not indulged too much or over-excited, and the performance is as different from the proceedings at an ordinary children's party as Milton's "heart-easing mirth" from his "vain deluding joys."

We owe to Froebel the first recognition of the high purpose in children's play, and the idea of ordering and arranging it so as to form a harmonious development according to Nature's methods. Full of sympathy with child-nature, and having himself a child-like simplicity of mind, he saw that true education is not the suppression of natural tendencies, but their wholesome encouragement. The outside life of the world has many inharmonious elements. In these children's games we have a little image of the world with the inharmonious elements eliminated. Joining in them is a training for living the right kind of life. The children do not talk about living rightly, but they do it. This is the best preparation for the right use of a wider experience.

A teacher of ethics better known than Froebel taught that the first condition of right life was to "become as a little child."

NOTE.—In quoting from Froebel's letter to Krause, the English translation by Emilie Michaelis and H. Keatley Moore has been used.

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